

February 2018



How's Your Child's School Climate?

By Talley Wells
GA Appleseed Executive Director



How often is your local school suspending its kids?

You can find out by school district, school, gender, grade, race, and special education status on the [Georgia Appleseed website](#). Through a partnership with the Georgia Department of Education, we provide easy-to-read charts showing out-of-school suspension data for every school and school district across the state. We are grateful to Ernst & Young for its pro bono work updating the data for the last school year.

As an attorney, I represented children in tribunal hearings when they faced long-term suspensions or expulsions. I would sit in the waiting room with the worried child and parent knowing that the child's future was at stake.

Suspending and expelling children leads to ever-compounding problems. The children may get into worse trouble out of school, fall further behind, and cause difficulties for parents who have to miss work. This is particularly true when a child is repeatedly or permanently sent home.

While it is easy to see the problems with suspensions, it is much harder to determine an alternative solution. After all, teachers and students need safe and healthy learning environments.

Georgia Appleseed has worked with education leaders, advocates, and school systems to develop evidence-based approaches to behavioral interventions that both work and that keep kids in school. Our Keeping Kids in Class [Toolkit](#) provides an array of resources for schools, school systems, families, and advocates.

"School Climate Change" is the key tool in our [Toolkit](#). School climate is the overall atmosphere of a school based on safety, teaching, learning, interpersonal relationships, and the environment of the physical building. A positive school climate leads to reductions in dropout rates, incidences of violence, and out-of-school suspensions. A

positive school climate simultaneously leads to improvements in teacher retention and student achievement.

The [Georgia Education Climate Coalition](#) (GECC), which Georgia Appleseed convenes and facilitates, is a group of state education leaders and advocates working to improve school climate across the state. [Read more...](#)

Successful Board Retreat launches GA Appleseed into 2018



Welcome Kim Anderson, New Board Director



Georgia Appleseed welcomes Kim Anderson to the Board of Directors. Kim touts an impressive record of leading dialogue, advancing change, and "building paths, not bridges." Read her full bio [here](#).

View a full list of our Board of Directors [here](#).

Good Apple Tickets Now On Sale!

Tickets for Good Apple are now on sale! Get yours today at bit.ly/GoodAppleTickets.



Find out why you'll want to be in the room on April 18th by following us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or [LinkedIn](#) and keeping an eye out for our "10 Good Reasons to Attend Good Apple".

Thank You to Our Sponsors

Georgia Appleseed is grateful to have such generous and dedicated supporters. We would like to extend a special thank you to our Good Apple 2018 Major Sponsors:

*Eversheds Sutherland
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Sponsorship opportunities are still available. View sponsor benefits and make a pledge [online](#), or contact Development Director Abi Gross at agross@gaappleseed.org for more information. See a full list of sponsors [here](#).

Student Tribunal CLE: ATL Bar March Madness!

Georgia Appleseed's YPC members are thrilled to once again present a CLE on Student Tribunal Representation, as a part of the Atlanta Bar Association's Pro Bono March Madness. Register for the CLE [here](#) and visit our [student tribunal referral page](#), which connects lawyers with foster kids facing tribunal hearings.

Georgia Appleseed's 2018 Board of Directors met in late January for the annual Board Retreat. The agenda included a robust discussion of what makes a "Georgia Appleseed" project and how GA Appleseed can increase it's impact in the years to come.

Savannah Cuyler-Brownsville Neighborhood Project Update

Georgia Appleseed's Community Revitalization Project in the Cuyler-Brownsville Neighborhood of Savannah is off to a healthy start. Lead attorney Chris Middleton has gathered stakeholders from the neighborhood as well as greater Savannah, with all expressing a deep concern for the neighborhood and a keen interest in our work there. Earlier this month, Chris and his partners attended the neighborhood association meeting and gave an abbreviated Know-Your-Rights presentation to the members; an alderman and police officers were also in attendance. The association responded warmly, and immediately formed a committee to plan for a full presentation to a larger, and younger, audience. We are pleased with the local interest in and ownership of the proposed presentation, and look forward to continuing work with neighborhood.

A Day of Justice at the Georgia State Capitol

Georgia Appleseed was honored to be a sponsor and participant of Justice Day 2018 -- a day of criminal justice reform advocacy at the State Capitol. Activists, lawyers, and invested community members gathered from around the state to share their work, inspire each



Left to Right: Development Coordinator, Grace Miller; Staff Attorney, Terrence Wilson; Board Director, Michelle Arrington; Executive Director, Talley Wells.

other, and encourage legislators to embrace criminal justice reform in Georgia. We were excited to share our work related to dismantling the school to prison pipeline and to showcase our success with PBIS as a strategy to keep kids in school and out of court.

You can read more about these projects and all our initiatives at www.gaappleseed.org/initiatives.

Student Tribunal Project

Hello and welcome to the referral form for Georgia Appleseed's Student Tribunal Project. Please note that this form is intended primarily for foster parents, Georgia DFCS case managers, and others who may be responsible for overseeing children in foster care.

The goal of the Student Tribunal Project is to seek volunteer attorneys to represent foster children who are facing disciplinary hearings in school. These hearings, often called tribunals, must be held when the student may be expelled from school or suspended for more than 10 days.

These tribunals are legal proceedings and are very important, and the outcomes can have a major impact on the child, not just educationally, but also from a placement and permanency perspective. There are often short turnaround times, and as soon as you learn that one of your foster children is going to have a disciplinary tribunal, regardless of when it is being held, please complete the following form, and we will attempt to get an attorney in place.

While there is no guarantee that we will be able to place any case, the Student Tribunal Project team will do everything we can to place your case with a volunteer attorney.

The first step is to complete the remainder of this form. If you have any questions about the Student Tribunal Project or this form, you may contact Regina Roberts at Georgia's Office of the Child Advocate. You can reach Regina by email at roberr@oaca.ga.gov.

If your case is placed with a volunteer attorney, you will be notified and the attorney will contact you for additional information.

For more information about Georgia Appleseed, please visit <http://www.gaappleseed.org>.

* Required

The following question will determine eligibility for assistance from Georgia Appleseed's Student Tribunal Project.

Are you involved with a student in foster care who is facing expulsion or out of school suspension for more than ten days? *

Yes

Toolkit Now More Mobile Friendly

Recent updates to our Keeping Kids In Class Toolkit has made many elements more mobile friendly. To see the updates in action, visit the ["Find My School Suspension Rate" interactive graph](#) on your tablet or mobile device.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE:

GEORGIA APPLESEED SUPPORTS HOUSE BILL 740

A bill that would limit pre-k through 3rd grade suspensions by examining the underlying causes of behavior. Read more about GA Appleseed's efforts to keep kids in school and out of court [here](#). #hb740 #gapol #seedsofjustice #keepkidsinschool

GEORGIA APPLESEED SUPPORTS HOUSE BILL 763

A bill that would ensure that school climate is examined in every county in the state. Read more about how the Georgia Education Climate Coalition (GECC) is promoting positive school climate reform [here](#). #gecc #pbis #gapol #hb763

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